1609/1603

A

PLAN

FOR THE BETTER

Maintenance and Regulation of the Parochial Poor.

IN

A LETTER TO THE SECRETARY

OF THE

BATH AND WEST OF ENGLAND AGRICULTURE SOCIETY.

BY

THOMAS HALL, Esq;

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S JUSTICES OF THE PEACE FOR THE COUNTY OF HANTS.

BATH; PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL.

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MAY

A Plan for the better Maintenance and Regulation of the Parochial Poor.

" The number of indigent perſons being greatly increaſed, by
" withdrawing the alms of the monaſteries, a plan was formed
" in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, more humane and benefi-
" cial than even feeding and clothing of millions; by affording
" them the means (with proper induſtry) to feed and to clothe
" themſelves. And the farther any ſubſequent plans for main-
" taining the poor have departed from this inſtitution, the
" more impracticable and even pernicious their viſionary at-
" tempts have proved." *Blackſtone's Com.* iv. 432.

TO THE SECRETARY.

SIR,

LOOKING over the liſt of premiums of your reſpectable Society, I obſerve one is directed for the improvement of the Poor Laws. This has put me on recollecting ſome circumſtances, which, in the courſe of near twenty-five years practice as a juſtice of the peace in the county of Hants, have occurred to me as likely to conduce much to the comfort of the poor, by making them more induſtrious than they are found to be at preſent; and alſo to introduce a laudable emulation and ſpirit of good order among that uſeful part of the community. The propoſitions are but few in number, but ſeem to me to be effectual to the point in view. The propoſal is as follows:

1*ſt*. That

1ſt. That in a bill to be brought into parliament, clauſes may be inſerted to authorize the juſtices of the peace to order a bounty on work, in certain caſes, with a view to producing better effects than by giving money to the poor.

1ſt. *This has been put in practice (by recommendation) for near fifteen or ſixteen years paſt; and has been found to produce an excellent effect. So that three ſhillings per week diſpenſed by the overſeers, but thought inſufficient for the ſupport of a family, conſiſting of ſix people, have, by a different mode of diſpoſal, in the way of bounty, produced the comfortable income of nine ſhillings per week for the ſupport of the ſame family. But later experience, introduced by the advice of a manufacturer, has abundantly evinced, the greater benefit of proportioning the propoſed bounty to each ſhilling earned, as the latter methods apply to the quality of work as well as the quantity. The former to quantity only.**

2*dly.* That certificates given agreeably to the Act of the 8th and 9th of King William the Third, and other ſubſequent acts, for the amendment of the

* *Illuſtration.* A. and B. are ſet to ſpinning, and are promiſed a bounty on their work, in the proportion of ſixpence bounty to each ſhilling earned. A. draws her work to a fineneſs of 1s. 6d. per pound, and B. only to 1s. A. of courſe is entitled to nine-pence, while B. deſerves only ſix-pence.

ſame,

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ſame, be hereafter limited to ſhort terms of years. See Gilbert's plan, 1781.

2dly. *The uſe of this is ſo very obvious, and promiſing of improvement, that it is ſuppoſed eight or ten certificates will be granted under the limitation, inſtead of one in the preſent mode. And thereby the number of induſtrious people in the nation will be much increaſed. As it is found on obſervation, that the certificated labourers are abundantly more active and induſtrious than the ſettled inhabitants. And, further, that if ſuch certificate be granted for a year only, the juſtices of the diviſion may enforce the granting it.*

8th and 9th William III. Cap. 30.

3dly. That a diſcriminate and ſpecial uſe of the badge be applied by the overſeers, with the conſent of the majority of a veſtry, (ſubject to appeal to the diviſion or diſtrict juſtices, at their petty ſeſſions) as a cenſure and puniſhment to the diſorderly and lazy poor only.

3dly. *It is ſuppoſed that a creditable mark or token of diſtinction might alſo be added with excellent effect. As a reward, for inſtance, to an induſtrious labourer, or an ingenious artiſt, who has bred up a numerous or conſiderable family in a reputable manner, without aſſiſtance*

aſſiſtance from the pariſh in which he is ſettled. Some real benefit may alſo be added thereto—ſuch as, an exemption from highway duty for a certain time, or for ever, as in the caſe of militia-men enrolled in their own right, and not as ſubſtitutes. Other uſeful ſervices to a neighbourhood may likewiſe be rewarded in the ſame manner; as for inſtance, to thoſe who proſecute or make diſcovery of perſons guilty of miſdemeanours, and the ſeveral degrees of larcenies and felonious offences.

Theſe obſervations are ſubmitted to the conſideration of the publick, as conſtituting an expedient for the better management and regulation of the poor of this kingdom. And it is preſumed that, by theſe means, the general body of the poor may be ſupported in the proportion of half the expence which has been incurred, on their account, for any given period of time within the laſt ſeven years; that better order and regularity will be eſtabliſhed and kept up among them; the national ſtock of induſtry increaſed; that the plan is eaſy, ſimple, and ſpeedy in its execution; and laſtly, that the largeſt county in the kingdom will not require *one hundred pounds* to carry the plan into practice, as the meaneſt cottage will, by the bounty propoſed, become a workhouſe for one family, ſo long as it will be wanted: a circumſtance, it is imagined, of no ordinary conſequence,

ſequence, at a ſeaſon when the kingdom has been put to large and heavy expences on account of improving gaols and publick priſons.

This, Sir, is the reſult of my obſervation; and, I truſt and believe, it contains hints that would be found effectual to the intended purpoſe. If it ſhould meet with the approbation of the committee, I own I ſhall think myſelf honoured by their good opinion; but if it ſhall only be the means of urging ſome more experienced perſon to propoſe a better plan, the community will receive the greater benefit, and I ſhall be a partaker of the general good, as an individual.

I am, Sir, your moſt humble ſervant,

THOMAS HALL.

Preſton-Candover near Odiham,
Hants, May 12, 1792.

P. S. It is ſuppoſed that this plan will operate peculiarly in manufacturing towns; where there are aged or ſinking manufacturers; and will enable a maſter to reward merit, or ſupport the diſtreſs of an individual labourer, without danger of advancing the general price of labour.

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THOMAS HALL.

Pyrton-Caufeway near Oxford,
March 25, 1758.

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